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SUBJECT: EAST JAVA: THE TANGLED WEB SURROUNDING THE SOLE FEMALE
GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE

REF: A. SURABAYA 88 (EAST JAVA GOVERNOR'S ELECTION)

[1](#)B. SURBAYA 51 (POLITICS IN EAST JAVA'S LARGEST MUSLIM ORGANIZATION)

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This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: East Java's female candidate for governor, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, succeeded in reaching the second round of the election, but faces strong criticism from women's issues activists in Surabaya. While her critics acknowledge that the Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) willingness to support a female candidate opens doors, they express concern about Khofifah's money-driven ties to the Patriot Party and Pancasila Youth (Pemuda Pancasila) and her commitment to advancing women's issues as governor. While the women's NGO network Forum Perempuan Peduli (FPP) previously pledged to support her candidacy, many changed their minds before the election. Most predict that her opponent, Soekarwo supported by the National Mandate Party (PAN), Democratic Party (PD) and The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), will win the run-off because of his reputation for transparency. End Summary.

BEHIND KHOFIFAH'S SUCCESS

[1](#)2. (SBU) During a regular lunch event on July 29 at the Consul General's residence, women's issues activists in Surabaya offered their perspective on the success of Khofifah Indar Parawansa in the July 23 gubernatorial election (ref A). Khofifah, the national chairwoman of Muslimat (the Nahdlatul Ulama women's organization) and Minister for Women's Empowerment in the Gus Dur administration, had not been endorsed by Gus Dur's divided National Awakening Party (PKB). Khofifah amassed the necessary 15% through the support of a coalition of 12 smaller parties, led by the United Development Party (PPP). The activists emphasized that Khofifah's success signaled an important change amongst East Java's traditionally conservative electorate in the NU heartland. They noted that in 2004, NU members would not accept a woman as a political leader. Indeed PPP, with substantial NU membership, had distributed a letter that specifically prohibited supporting female candidates. In this election, NU Chairman Hasyim Muzaidi pledged his support and the influential NU clerics, Kiai, instructed NU members to support Khofifah. The luncheon guests praised the positive impact of Khofifah's success thus far on the attitudes of students at East Java's Islamic schools (pesantrens) in particular.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The women's activist community speculated that many voted for Khofifah because she represented a new face in East

Java politics. Despite spending more than any other candidate, Golkar's Soenarjo, who served as vice governor for the past 10 years, placed a disappointing fourth. The PKB candidate hand-picked by Gus Dur garnered less than 10% and finished a distant fifth. The activists expressed concern, however, that in reality Khofifah is entrenched in old money politics. Khofifah clearly benefited from the unified support of Muslimat members and rewarded them accordingly. According to press reports, Khofifah's campaign team gave a car to each Muslimat branch in East Java before the first round, and intends to give a car to each of the 44 branches of NU before the runoff. (Note: Because the cars were given to organizations rather than to individuals, these "donations" are not considered in violation of campaign rules.)

WHO'S FINANCING KHOFIFAH AND WHY?

14. (SBU) Because Khofifah lacked the support of any major parties, she needed the financial backing of the Patriot Party. Led by Yapto Suryosumarno, the Patriot Party has a reputation as a corrupt party of gangsters, or "preman", with links to national business interests and the Suharto regime. Tomy Winata, the wealthy businessman and owner of Artha Graha Bank who has been questioned on allegations of corruption, reportedly plays an important financing role. Yapto is also the chairman of Pemuda Pancasila, an organization known for attacking political opponents and instigating violence on behalf of Suharto during the New Order. The Patriot Party's East Java leader, La Nyala Mattaliti, campaigned alongside Khofifah heavily, and the Patriot Party's role in her campaign was seen to overpower that of PPP. This reportedly caused grief within PPP ranks. With the Patriot Party's financial assistance, Khofifah was able to afford an ambitious advertising campaign that some analysts say contributed to her success.

A QUESTION OF COMMITMENT

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15. After reviewing the platforms of all five candidates, the activist from FPP initially decided to support Khofifah as the best candidate to advance women's issues in East Java. However, after a meeting with three of the governor and vice-governor teams, they said they changed their view, disliking her personality and finding her to be more concerned with the demands of the business community than with advancing women's issues. They also expressed concern that civil society's concerns would take a back seat to NU priorities.

16. (SBU) The activists concluded that Soekarwo, with his reputation for transparency as provincial secretary, would be a better governor than Khofifah and predicted a Soekarwo victory. An HIV/AIDS activist recounted that Soekarwo was the first candidate to respond to a letter asking for a commitment to open budgeting and community participation. They surmised that Golkar voters will vote for Soekarwo in retaliation for Hasyim Muzadi's public support for Khofifah (in opposition to the Golkar ticket which included the former East Java NU Chairman -- Ref B). It's unclear who PDI-P voters, whose candidate came a close third, would support in the runoff. While ideologically, PDI-P should be more inclined to support Soekarwo, press reports suggest that Hasyim Muzadi is arranging a deal with PDI-P chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri to support Khofifah. The activists agreed, however, that the contest would be close.

MCCLELLAND